

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----271700Z 014386 /41

P R 271628Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BONN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7741  
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
AMEMBASSY LISBON  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG  
AMEMBASSY OSLO  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK  
AMEMBASSY ROME

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EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS ACTION PRIORITY TO SECDEF AND  
INFO ROUTINE TO DOD, CINC USAF RAMSTEIN, AND CINC EUR  
VAIHINGEN.

MILITARY ADDEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE.

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: NATO, AWACS, MIKI, GW  
SUBJECT: MINISTER LEBER'S VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF NATO  
AEW

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REFS: (A) STATE 090910 (NOTAL); (B) BONN 06339 DTG  
131229Z APR 77 (NOTAL); (C) USNATO 2394  
DTG 251550Z APR 77 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING MY APRIL 26 TOUR D'HORIZON WITH  
MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEBER (SEE SEPARATE REPORTS FOR

OTHER SUBJECTS COVERED), HE SHOWED A STRONG PERSONAL COMMITMENT TOWARDS THE NATO AEW SYSTEM DESPITE THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM. HIS GAME PLAN IS TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT WITH THE FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER NEXT WEEK IN HOPES OF ENCOURAGING FRENCH PARTICIPATION. ONE WEEK LATER HE WILL DISCUSS THE SUBJECT WITH THE ITALIAN DEFENSE MINISTER, WHO IS CURRENTLY CHAIRMAN OF THE EPG.

IF THESE TWO MEETINGS PROVE SUCCESSFUL, LEBER HOPES TO ACHIEVE A U.S./EUROPEAN CONCEPT FOR A NATO AEW. I DELIBERATELY REFRAINED FROM DISCUSSING ANY TARGET DATES WITH LEBER (REF A). IN MY VIEW, DISCUSSING TIMETABLES WITH THE FRG AT THIS POINT WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND, INDEED, RISK BLUNTING LEBER'S PERSONAL DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE A NATO AEW PROGRAM. I RECOMMEND THAT SECRETARY BROWN BE SIMILARLY CAUTIOUS IN DISCUSSING TARGET DATES WHEN HE SEES MINISTER LEBER AT THE MAY 17-18 DPC MINISTERIAL MEETING. END SUMMARY.

1. I FOUND MINISTER LEBER TO BE ANXIOUS TO DISCUSS THE NATO AEW PROGRAM. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY ANGRY AT THE BRITISH DECISION TO PRODUCE THE NIMROD. THIS DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE UK IS WIDESPREAD IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY AND ELSEWHERE IN GERMAN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE NIMROD DECISION, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF CONTINUED BRITISH INSISTENCE THAT THE FRG PAY PART OF THE COSTS OF THE BAOR AND BECAUSE OF THE UK'S CONTINUING POOR ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE. MINISTER LEBER INDICATED THAT THE  
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UK WOULD PROBABLY ATTEMPT TO CLAIM THAT NIMROD WAS A NATO SYSTEM AND SHOULD BE FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED BY THE REST OF THE ALLIES. HE INDICATED THAT HE SIMPLY COULD NOT AGREE WITH SUCH A POSITION.

2. MINISTER LEBER SAID IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO SEE IF THE NIMROD AND AWACS SYSTEMS WERE TECHNICALLY INTER-OPERABLE. HE NOTED THAT THE NORWEGIAN DEFENSE MINISTER HAD SPOKEN TO HIM OF HIS WORRY ABOUT THE GAP WHICH WOULD BE LEFT BY UTILIZATION OF NIMROD. NIMROD WAS ONLY A MARITIME SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM AND HAD NO AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY. MINISTER LEBER FURTHER STATED THAT BOTH HE AND THE NORWEGIAN DEFENSE MINISTER WERE WORRIED ABOUT HOW TO FILL THE AIR DEFENSE ROLE IN THE NORTH.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDEES.

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3. MINISTER LEBER THEN LAUNCHED INTO A DESCRIPTION OF HIS OWN PLANS TO MAKE A NATO AEW PROGRAM STILL POSSIBLE. HE SAID THAT THE FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD BE COMING TO BONN NEXT WEEK AND THAT HIS FRENCH COLLEAGUE KNEW THAT AWACS WOULD BE ONE OF THE SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION. LEBER'S GOAL IS TO TURN THE BRITISH DECISION INTO A GAIN FOR THE ALLIANCE AS A WHOLE BY BRINGING THE FRENCH INTO THE NATO AEW PROGRAM. THIS COULD BE DONE ONLY BY PRODUCING A POSITIVE EUROPEAN INITIATIVE.

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4. THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE HAD SPOKEN WITH THE ITALIAN DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER ABOUT HIS PLAN TO LAUNCH A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE TO SAVE THE NATO AEW PROGRAM. THE ITALIAN DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER SUPPORTED THE IDEA, BUT HIS MINISTER WAS AS YET UNCONVINCED. ACCORDING TO LEBER, THE ITALIAN DEFENSE MINISTER WILL BE VISITING BONN ON MAY 12 AND HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO WIN HIM OVER AT THAT TIME.

5. LEBER WENT ON TO SAY THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED NOW WAS A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE FOR THE DPC MEETING. THIS EUROPEAN INITIATIVE SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THE UNITED STATES IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A U.S./EUROPEAN CONCEPT FOR A NATO AEW. WITHOUT THIS, LEBER WENT ON, HE FEARED THAT THE NATO AEW WILL BECOME A U.S./FRG PROJECT AND NOT A NATO ONE. THE MINISTER NOTED THAT IT MAY STILL COME TO THAT, BUT THAT HE WANTED AT LEAST TO TRY TO MAKE IT A EUROPEAN/U.S. PROJECT. TO DO THIS, HE SAID, HE NEEDED TIME. ACCORDING TO LEBER, THE WORST POSSIBLE THING WOULD BE FOR THE U.S. TO TRY TO PUT PRESSURE ON ITS ALLIES, INCLUDING THE FRG, AT THIS MOMENT.

6. MINISTER LEBER CONTINUED THAT HE WOULD KEEP ME POSTED ON THE RESULTS OF BOTH MEETINGS SO THAT I COULD INFORM SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BROWN OF WHAT HAD OCCURRED BEFORE THE SECRETARY WENT TO THE DPC MEETING. LEBER REFERRED TO HIMSELF AS A "MIDWIFE" TRYING TO ASSIST THE BIRTH OF THE NATO AEW.

7. LEBER CLOSED THIS PORTION OF OUR DISCUSSION BY EMPHASIZING ONCE AGAIN THAT THE OUTCOME OF HIS MEETINGS WITH THE ITALIAN AND FRENCH MINISTERS MIGHT WELL BE NEGATIVE. SHOULD THEY PROVE POSITIVE, THE MINISTER SAID HE THOUGHT WE SHOULD GET A DEMONSTRATION AWACS AIRCRAFT HERE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE SO THAT THE CHANCELLOR AND  
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THE MINISTER OF FINANCE COULD SEE THE SYSTEM AT FIRST HAND. I STATED OUR GREAT WILLINGNESS TO DO SO, BUT SUGGESTED THAT THE AIRCRAFT SHOULD ALSO VISIT OTHER NATO CAPITALS TO DEMONSTRATE THE ALLIANCE NATURE OF THE NATO AEW PROGRAM. MINISTER LEBER ENTHUSIASTICALLY SECONDED THIS SUGGESTION, MENTIONING IN PARTICULAR THE DESIRABILITY OF THE DEMONSTRATION AWACS AIRCRAFT VISITING OSLO, THE HAGUE, AND OTHER CAPITALS OF THE SMALLER NATO NATIONS.

8. COMMENT: I WOULD JUDGE THE PROSPECTS FOR LEBER ELICITING ANY KIND OF DIRECT FRENCH SUPPORT FOR

PARTICIPATION IN THE AWACS PROJECT TO BE LOW, BUT IT IS  
OF INTEREST THAT HE IS WILLING TO TRY. HE IS CLEARLY  
SENSITIVE ABOUT BEING PRESSED ON TIMING DEADLINES AND  
FUNDING DETAILS, AND I FEEL IT WOULD BE BEST TACTICALLY  
TO HOLD OFF AT PRESENT IN PUSHING HIM. LEBER'S OWN  
PROBLEMS WITHIN THE MINISTRY AND WITH OTHER FRG AGENCIES  
AS WELL AS THE BUNDESTAG (ALL OF WHICH HE ALLUDED TO  
INDIRECTLY WITH ME) ARE SERIOUS, BUT HE AT LEAST SEEMS  
PERSONALLY AND STRONGLY COMMITTED TO AWACS, AND THIS  
IS ALL TO THE GOOD.  
STOESSEL

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## Message Attributes

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